

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

HABITATS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Upland Shrub

Description

Upland shrub habitats are upland sites with fewer than 10% trees and 50% or more of the area in tall, persistent shrubs. A variety of shrub species may be present, including hazels, dogwoods, juneberry, sumac, ninebark, and prickly ash. Alder may be found on upland soils along wetland fringes and abandoned pastures. In Wisconsin, most upland shrub habitats represent a successional stage between grasslands and forests. These habitats often are temporary, following disturbances such as logging or burning events. In some situations, frequent burning or mowing (every 3-5 years) may create conditions in which shrubs and sprouts (“grubs”) from trees such as oaks are maintained as the dominant plants. These areas may be important to an array of native plants and animals, particularly where the vegetation had been dependent on periodic wildfire. In other upland situations, assemblages of native shrubs, saplings, or stunted trees may persist on cliff margins, bedrock escarpments, or rocky shorelines (e.g., Apostle Islands; Niagara Escarpment; bedrock glades in the Baraboo Hills).

Most upland shrub habitats are small or linear, interspersed among other habitats, scattered across former pastures, or along old fence lines, unmanaged woodlands, or utility corridors. Various wildlife species, including important game animals like deer, pheasant, and woodcock, use these sites for cover, feeding, and nesting. In an otherwise forested matrix, such sites can provide nesting habitat for shrub-nesting songbirds (e.g., blue-winged warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, etc.). However, these communities can also become infested with non-native invasive plants such as honeysuckles, buckthorns, and garlic mustard, and facilitate their spread into adjacent habitats.

Management Techniques

- Mowing/brushing
- Prescribed fire
- Pesticide treatments

Management Prescriptions

- Maintain native shrub communities on appropriate sites to provide habitat for wildlife, including game species, particularly where it helps to create a gradual transition, or “soft edge” between forested and more open habitat types.
- Use prescribed fire, mowing, and brushing to maintain the vigor and diversity of desirable native shrubs, managing for a variety of structures and age classes.
- Where upland shrub areas are infested with non-native invasive plants, convert to an appropriate native habitat using cutting, fire, herbicide or other techniques.

